

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 23, 2004**

Members Present: Hastings, Thompson, Carroll, Ennis, Harden, Kitson, Magner, Morris, Newstadt, Timberman, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Lardizzone and Phillips

Staff Present: Davila

Guests: Paul Spera (Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Veterans Liaison), Al Carter (SOS), Gloria Homer (DAS), Tom Daws, Ralph Hoag and Terry Baker (VVA), Richard Carmean (City of Milford), Bill Holloway (BHH Architects), Reginald Glasby (Veterans Upward Bound Program)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Hastings –We have a number of special guests with us this morning. I will start by getting an update on where we are on the Veterans Home. Gloria Homer, Director of Administrative Services, do you want to make your comments?

Homer – I am Gloria Homer, Secretary of the Department of Administrative Services, and I am the Chair of the Steering Committee for the Veterans Home. Administrative Services constructs buildings for the State, so that is why I am the head of the Steering Committee. As you probably know, there are other agencies on the Steering Committee, the Department of State, Health and Social Services, Budget, and of course there are members of Veterans Affairs on the Steering Committee as well. We have made a significant amount of progress since Bob Furman came and talked to you at your last meeting and it is some very good news. I can tell you that the project is still on schedule and still on budget too. We had several issues we had to resolve regarding the property. Last time Bob Furman was here, did he mention to you about moving the site from one part of the business park to the other side of the business park? We had some issues with wetlands on both of those parcels. We had the delineation from the Corps of Engineers completed for the parcel that is more central. The one that we have all finally decided on was the better parcel. Governor Minner had written them a letter asking them to rush and I think they did it in two days. We do not have a problem. There are wetlands on it, but they have been delineated, so we will just build where there are not wetlands. We certainly have plenty of room to build the Home. The archeological issues have been resolved. There isn't anything there of value or we would have to continue to dig. As you know, that parcel that was chosen is 23 acres, which is obviously larger than the 13 acres that was originally thought. The city has agreed that 23 acres is the amount we will be able to own. When we finally occupy the building in December of 2006, we will certainly not take up all that property. But, the city asked us to plan for anything that may happen in the future and we have done that. Thinking we may want to add a wing, or there was a thought that we may want to add a clinic for veterans not in the Home. We went to talk to veterans at the hospital in Elsmere and they suggested that we plan for a clinic there, so we have done that. The city has been extremely generous in giving us ten extra acres and as you probably know, they are paying for all the utilities to come up to that site. We also had to get through the Phase II environmental stage, and that has been done as well. Phase I was to look at the property and say could there be anything, and we did not see anything. Phase II is when you dig a little deeper, and we dug a little deeper and we still didn't see anything. There is no pollution on the property, so that is more good news. The Steering Committee has preliminarily looked at the plans. Bill Holloway, who is the architect, will be here to talk to you about those plans. Also, we have looked at the exterior and we have a recommendation for you there as well. The equipment list has been developed. The federal government says that we can spend only 10% of the project on equipment, which is not enough. So the administration has agreed to put any equipment we cannot fit into the budget, in the operating budget. That means the State of Delaware will put approximately \$1.4M into this building to make sure it is equipped properly. We are looking at state of the art equipment in all areas. We want to make sure this is done right, and it is just going to cost, and the Governor is willing to pay for it. We thought the RFP was going to be out in December. The RFP is the invitation for contractors and architects to come back to us with a proposal for them to build it. That sounds like a month slippage, but it is not. When the architect was doing the original schedule, he thought that when we said we would be done in December 2006, that we meant we had to move people in December 2006. What we meant was, we would have our certificate of occupancy December 2006. So that gives him about two months to plan, which works out really well. So, we are actually almost a month ahead of schedule, if you look at it that way. We are concerned about the fact that the VA has a lot of forms that have to be submitted in order, which are all connected. It is not easy to find them and it is not easy to figure out how they interconnect, especially if you have never done one of these, as you know, we haven't. So, we have hired a consultant to help us with that to make sure we are getting all the forms in right so

we do not lose anytime on this. As you may recall, the VA has never done a design build home. They have done an addition in Florida, but never a Home. So, we are breaking new ground here, and for that reason, we wanted to make sure we had a professional who is looking at these documents. Their documents are really not for design build, so we are going to have to work with the VA. We will probably add some information they do not have and ask them to not ask for some information we do not have as well. Hopefully, they will change that once we become the guinea pig and they figure out how to work it. I can say that the Veterans Administration has been very helpful to us; they answer our phone calls and e-mails very quickly. The Home is now about 96,000 sqft, which we think is within budget. But, we are now asking Heery International, which is on contract, to estimate the cost. It is possible that it is over, and if it is over, we are going to have to work at paring something down. We are going to be sending in the plans, such as they are, to the VA on Monday, to find out if there is anything in the plans we are missing. If there is anything missing, some space somewhere, then we will have to either negotiate that with them, or reduce the footage somewhere else. We think we have everything, but you never know. We are very excited with the City of Milford, they have bent over backwards to help us out. They got us that first deed quickly and then they said maybe there is some place better. So, they are willing to give us other property that is really more desirable and give us more property. Now we have to get rid of that deed and get a new deed, and they are fine with that. We talked about putting a boulevard from Airport Rd to the Home, so that people can see it; somewhat of a grand entrance. The city is very much interested in doing that for us. Everybody was concerned about the zoning, and the city is willing to work with that too, by re-zoning the entire piece to make sure that all the activities around the Veterans Home are compatible with the Home. I would ask that I could introduce Richard Carmean, he is the City Manager for Milford and he is going to talk about the zoning.

Hastings – We are tentatively planning on a groundbreaking ceremony in May timeframe, does that sound good?

Homer – That still sounds good, there shouldn't be any reason that shouldn't happen that we know of right now. In fact, the city has also been generous in that they will put some kind of road there, if at all possible, so that we can have the groundbreaking on the site, rather than just on Airport Road.

Carroll – The consultant, Corner Stone Group, is that their project also?

Homer – The State also has a process that every nursing home has to go through, to make sure that there are not too many beds in the State. We have hired Corner Stone to do that application. That application is right on time too, we do not see any problem with getting that certificate. We just want to get it as soon as possible and get one more thing off the list.

Carmean – Gloria did not leave me too much to say, she pretty much summed everything up. I still get the feeling, about not only your project, but that the whole side of the park in general, is still in a bit of flux. I have meetings going on for the next couple of weeks, dealing with the park. For instance, next week I meet with Delaware Hospice, which some of you know, are very interested in putting a facility somewhere on that side of the park. It is really something unique to Delaware; we are going to have two of them. Hospice is going to offer a living facility with 16 apartments for people in their final several weeks or months, which will allow them to bring their families and pets with them. Their families can actually live in this unit with them and they have instant pain management 24 hours a day. Also, there will be a lot of Hospice staff and administration that is now located around Sussex County, brought in there and housed in their new facility. They have really been on me to meet with them. But, I would not sit with them until I knew where you folks were with your home and where it would sit in relationship to the park. There have been a lot of concerns about location. A lot of other people probably wanted it in a different part of the State. All Milford ever wanted to do is make this offer for the veterans. Needless to say, when it came our way and it was the choice of the group, we were very pleased about it. Please keep in mind that we are not entering into it lightly, nor are we trying to in anyway, have you worry about what is going to be out there with you, we are looking at two different zones now. We meet with, I think Administrative Services, and we even discussed a couple of zones A-1, OC office complex. The week after next, as I said, I will meet with different groups. I will meet with the Boys and Girls Club, our Parks and Recreation, and I am now looking at turning over some acreage over to them, which will be used by the Boys and Girls Club. We will also be talking week after next to the hospital. I do not know their level of interest yet, but I have heard things like some units out there for therapy. Anything from a therapeutic pool and that sort of thing, I am not sure to what extent. I have talked with the folks from Home of the Brave, which most of you folks are familiar with down in Milford, and they think there is some money available to them to really provide some more services to our veterans. They think that this side of the professional park would be very conducive to what they would like to do. So it is very likely as things work out, that they will be on this side of the park. I explained to Administrative Services that we changed the zone; we changed the name of it. This should not be known at this point as Milford Business Park or anything else. The veterans could be very much involved in this; would you like to name it? The naming of the streets, you know everything is open to you. Milford is looking at a \$2½ M investment, between the cost of that land, what it is truly worth itself with economic development growth, and the infrastructure. You are going to have a

beautiful facility even though you may not know exactly what it is going to look like. But it is sitting back off the road, which is positive. But on the other hand, if we allow buildings all in front of it, between Airport Rd and in front of your facility, I think it would take away from the impact of it. So we are looking now at making more of a boulevard entrance coming in, possibly going up to a fountain and plantings. It would go up to your facility and come back out the other side of this center isle. But again, we have not worked with any engineers on that yet. I think most of you have copies of the two zones we are discussing, OC office complex and the H1. I think the OC is probably closer to what we want. It certainly does not allow manufacturing and those kinds of things, but it could give us some trouble with the hospital. Later on, you may be looking at a clinic out there, so we have to look at this before we jump right in and master change the zones. But believe me, the city council is going to change the zones so it meets the needs of that side of the park. So those are some of the things that are going on and the doors have been closed on none of this. We very much want the veterans, in particular, along with Administrative Services, to be involved with what we should call that side (the 100 acres) and your concerns over the zoning. I will certainly try to answer them. My planning person was with me last meeting, but she is in North Carolina on vacation right now. Certainly, either one of these zones is more protective than the zone we have out there.

Hastings – The entire 60 acres will be zoned the same?

Carmean – It is about 90 acres, and yes it will all be zoned under the same zone.

Hastings – How about if we appointed a committee on the Veterans Commission to come up with some recommended names for the park?

Carmean – That would be excellent. In fact, once we get a little more feel for it and get going, there will be more streets and such, and the veterans can be more involved by naming roads, as long as we can get it by the 911 addressing.

Kitson – Both of these have pretty good size columns, one is 50 ft. and one is 70 ft. for the height of the building, which is 5-7 stories. Are we looking at a sub-story building going up?

Carmean - We only allow three stories basically. Everything built there will have to go through a site plan, which means you are kind of the first owners out there, next to the Boys and Girls Club, they actually had the first piece of land out there. For the site plan review, you will be notified and you will be in the room for the planning and zoning down the road for city council. The vets have more pull than the volunteer firemen, so you are going to have a lot of say as to what goes out there. I don't think now, or in the future, you have to worry about anything boxing the view of your building. In giving you the 23 acres instead of the 13, it gives you all kinds of insulation around you. You will certainly have all kinds of capabilities of moving the building however you want it. I think the woods that will be left out there will make all kinds of wonderful walking paths and that sort of thing. We are going to build a storm water management pond somewhere off your property line. It is going to be a wet pond and we found that people enjoy those ponds, ducks come and you can fish in them, and I even think that will be a positive for the Home. You will not have to worry about 5-7 story buildings out there; they will not be allowed. Right now, developers are building three story housing units with parking underneath, which is basically a four story. But, they cannot be any higher than 40 ft. to the ceiling of the highest unit and the additional height of the roof, but still you are not looking at much over 55 ft. even on those condo units. The Home of the Brave is looking for some longer-term residency for the veterans that need that, and they are looking at possibly three stories. Again, they would not be sitting in front of this facility, they would be somewhere off to the right or left. To be quite honest, if they had more money for this, and there could be more participation in the road work and infrastructure work and all that, it would not even be necessary to look into developing the other acreage. But, I really do have to look at selling some of it to the right people to help cover the cost. It just would not be fair to pass too much more on to the taxpayers. We feel with you, Hospice and the Boys and Girls Club, that side of the 100 acres is a success. We could argue with the bond committee, where we got some of our money with the State, that economically, it is going to be a viable piece of property. There is going to be a lot of job opportunities.

Ennis -The 4-8 acres that you were previously asking to take back, has that been resolved?

Carmean – Yes, I was not asking to take it back, just if there was not some of it that was going to be used. Then I got a call from the Secretary and it was like we will take all 23 acres. I feel very secure that you will not see anything out there that will be objectionable. I can't guarantee that everything will be built in a Georgian style like yours, but things will be built that complement it. I saw what Hospice wants, and I could not find the picture and I apologize, it is a gorgeous two-story building, which would be located to the right or left of you.

Kitson – From what I understand, it is supposed to be to the back and over to the left.

Carmean – Probably somewhere on where you had the old property, the original 13 acres. Again, the building they showed us is very attractive; it is \$17-\$18M.

Hastings – Is it Victorian or Georgian?

Carmean – Mostly it is brick with the pillars and so forth, I am not sure if it is Georgian or Victorian. But I am sure if you guys lock in on what you are going to have, I am sure they are going to be willing to work with you. At first they wanted to try and get together with Administrative Services, but the timeline just wasn't right. So maybe you could share cost in site preparation, management of the sites, parking, and those types of things. A lot of times, when you deal with the black topping and site preparation, moving the earth, you can save money with both entities going together. You are on a real timeline and we couldn't work that out.

Hastings – The Hospice, what are we looking at, 2008?

Carmean - I think they are looking at 2007; they have a pretty good agenda too, moving along on it. The Boys and Girls Club, I am not sure if they are doing real well on their capital program. Again, I think there will be a lot of opportunities. I could be wrong, but a lot of these kids could help by taking a walk over to the Veterans Home and interacting with some of the veterans, if the veterans are willing to do that. It could be a big help to those kids and I am sure the veterans would enjoy that. The pool will be, and I doubt if you will have one at your facility, but it will be there available for the veterans that wanted to go there. If the hospital puts a therapy pool in, that surely will be a positive right there on the site. Hopefully, there will be pathways, whether it is for a wheelchair or walking, and they can walk over and watch kids playing ball or soccer, that sort of thing. I think it is all going to be positive in that aspect.

Carroll - The overall naming of that site, could there be a different name then what it is now being called because there are others going in there?

Carmean – You mean the other site itself?

Carroll – On the north side.

Carmean – That is absolutely open. Like I said, you folks can pretty well pick it. It can have something with the veterans name in it. They have not sold any property to anyone who can object to that. If we had two or three other people in there, they could say no I bought it under this name or that, but right now it is wide open.

Carroll – There has been a lot of concern over what it is now being called.

Carmean – I understand. For the life of me, I couldn't see out on Airport Rd, putting a big entrance sign saying Business and Professional Park. Not with what is going there. Veterans Park or whatever you want. Like General Hastings said, you get a committee together and give us some suggestions about what you like.

Baker – I want to thank the town of Milford. I see that the committee and the town of Milford have been working together because you have addressed concerns that we have been raising for a little while. But one of the things is the zoning, which we are really concerned with, and we have discussed it as an organization, and I believe the H1 is the five story or 50 ft.

Carmean – Yes, because of the fact that it allows a full service hospital type facility.

Baker – And the OC is the other one and it is above five, is that correct?

Carmean – 70 ft.

Baker – We really hope that the town considers the H1 zoning, just because the fact that anything over five will take away from what we have there. I hear there was concern about the Boys and Girls Club because the gymnasium reaches a level just a little bit above that. I am sure that ourselves and other organizations have no problem with that being grandfathered so they can have that gymnasium at that level. Just so that other businesses and their buildings were not higher than that. Another concern is how the other buildings are going to look and I would hope that the city of Milford would somehow request that the other people who are putting buildings in there would try to stick to a theme, so that everything looks about

the same and that we could have a patriotic theme. For most of us, this is going to be a veterans' facility and a veterans' park and probably a very patriotic look there and we just want everything to kind of look the same.

Carmean – If you are facing your property, that property is definitely well off to the right of you. From a sight point of view, that roof on the gym is kind of built in and nobody is really going to be able to see if it is five feet taller or not. We can make them look a certain way through covenant. I got a lesson out of the other side. Everything was going fine esthetically on the buildings, and all the sudden one of my employees dropped the ball, and I had a metal building out there and it didn't look real attractive. So we do have to make sure something like that doesn't happen. We can say something like everything has to be a stone front, or all the doors and windows have to be wood frame, or something like that. First of all, we want to see what the vets are going to have, so we can sort of take from that and say this is kind of what we want everything else to look like.

Baker – We envision like the Anthony P. Roberts Memorial Park, with VFW Boulevard and VVA Avenue, and stuff like that. That is what we see and that is what we feel we want.

Carmean – We have gone from a 13-acre offer to 23. Plus, I really do not know really what it is going to cost in buildable land to keep the front open in a boulevard sense, but we are going to do that. We will probably have 45 to 50 acres tied up in the prevention of anything unsightly with this building alone. As I said, when anyone comes forward for a site plan review in this park, as property owners, you guys will be there and that is where you will get all the input you want.

Baker – From my experience, 10 years down the road, things could change because it is not locked in stone. I do not know what the projected completion for the whole park is, but it makes us feel more comfortable if we were locked in on that zoning code.

Carmean – Quite frankly, I do not see where we will get a whole lot more out there. Again, I have not seen the engineering and where things are going to fall, but we are certainly not going to get a whole lot more out there. So I will have more information in a month or so. We will know more about what the hospital is going to do, definitely more on Hospice, and maybe a little more on the Home of the Brave. I know I have talked to a few doctors, but they will more likely be put on the other side, on the doctor's processional end.

Homer – Does the H1 not allow for the Boys and Girls Club?

Carmean – Exactly, but they are there. So possibly, we are thinking about legally working around the grandfathered situation. They are there under the present zone, so we can grandfather them in. Certainly, I don't think you folks will say anything about the fact that we allowed the Boys and Girls Club to be grandfathered, so that is probably how we will work that.

Daws – There has been a lot of misunderstandings and issues from the beginning on the Veterans Home and some of the information that was put out here today was very encouraging. I am very encouraged to hear about the zone and the facade of the buildings. I have had a big problem with the terminology of a business park. Knowing that we can change that to a Veterans Park or a Memorial Park or however we want to name it, that is very encouraging to me. Gentleman, I appreciate you wanting to form a committee and I would like to volunteer George Webb to be on that committee.

Hoag – I just want to extend our appreciation to you, in that we, the VVA, would like to work with you in partnership and work with you as close as possible.

Carmean – I appreciate that, and as I said, the door is always going to be open. Gloria Homer has already complemented me. We haven't said no to a thing. Everything we have been asked, we have said yes to, and in all probability, that is going to continue, regardless of the feeling of my community on what this means to the veterans. We have ended up very happy from an economic development standpoint. When you talk about Hospice and the Veterans Home, you are talking about a lot of jobs and it is going to be very positive for the city. I had a couple of people say to me, you are giving the land away and where are the jobs you promised me? I really didn't have the answer at the time, but I have it now. We have jobs; we have a couple of hundred jobs between the two facilities. Then we have the Boys and Girls Club that does a lot of daycare, which allows a lot of people to work who would not otherwise be able to work without proper daycare.

Morris – You not only have to deal with everything that is here, but the homeowners on both sides of those properties will be watching this very closely. So what we are seeing now is probably more appealing to them than the business park that is

on the other side to the road right behind their facility. It looks like you are going to take a lot of the sting out of that concern.

Carmean – The feedback is that they are very happy about this. They were pretty happy about the development on the other side; all in all, they are pretty happy about it. They use it for exercise and their kids go over there and ice skate on the pond and they ride their bikes. They are pretty happy with the building over there for the most part and the professional side with the doctors. Everybody is tickled to death about this project and they are also happy about Hospice, that is another issue that is very popular. But the Veterans Home is a big plus for the city. Anytime you want me up at one of your meetings, just give me a call. Or if you need anybody else from the community, I will drag the mayor up here if you want him.

Holloway – We would like to update the Commission on what we presented to the Steering Committee and what you see here in front of you in these drawings. These are different stylistic interpretations of how we can look at this facility. First, we took kind of a Georgian mansion, kind of a John Dickinson mansion approach, which is a colonial kind of look. The second, is a little more indigenous to a Southern Delaware kind of a Victorian farm house shape, little steeper pitches. Then we have this element you see in each of these, is the chapel, which in the new version of the plan, we have identified as a little more prominent. This bottom one is kind of a pitched roof, but a little more contemporary in its approach, we would call that a neo-contemporary. So we offer up these three images for your opinion, and I am curious as to which one appeals most to people. Because of the design build, a two-phase process, we are trying to come up with something to give the design builder and his architect as an idea of what the expectations of the State of Delaware and the veterans are. So they will come back and rework this thing. But we are trying to establish a quality level and an imagery that everyone would be happy with.

Hastings – From a cost standpoint?

Holloway – With the way they are drawn, all three would probably have to be pared down a little bit as we start to get into the cost and value of the engineering process.

Morris – It will be another 30 days before we meet again, so for us to get a consensus or an idea, it takes us a little bit of time. We noticed there is a lot of movement that happens in Gloria Homer's group and it is pretty fast. I have opinions about all three. But as a representative of the State's largest veterans group, I want to at least be able to go back to the group and present that to them. My personal feelings, and I will make them known to the group, is that I like the second one. My first view of the top one is that you had gun towers in it, and I didn't particularly care for that. The bottom one is a little more modern than I think I would like to see it go, so that is why I like the center one. But again, I would like to have something to take back to my organization. I meet with the executive board the first Monday.

Holloway – We can get copies of what we distributed at the Steering Meeting.

Morris – I can present that to the commander and executive board and get a decision back a lot quicker. I do not want to wait until the next general meeting because that will not happen until January.

Hastings – The next meeting of the Steering Group is December 1, 2004, so we could get input from everyone here in time for that meeting. As Morris said, we have to be cognizant of the timeline everybody is on so we do not force a delay on anything. At what point in time does this need to be decided?

Holloway – We are trying to establish a level of quality and imagery to inform the design builder when they give us cost negotiations in January. There will be a five-month period, up until and through May of next year, where the design build architect will be doing a final evaluation. So there will be plenty of opportunity for input in terms of that. However, at this point in time, we are just trying to get a sense of what is closest to the consensus of most people who have input on this. Any one of these would probably generate a budget that is going to give us enough money to design something with the second architect of record. We are just trying to be as accurate as we can and with the sensitivities of all the constituents that are serviced, rather than go down some road that is going to be unrealistic as to what people think is attractive.

Hastings – And the final product is probably not going to look exactly like any one of those.

Holloway – That is correct. I cannot say that strong enough, because you have some more hands that are going to enter into it. The constant is going to be the input of the Steering Committee and the various constituencies in the process, and we will be there representing all of you. We are not going to forget all the comments you have given to us along this six-month

process. We will be there as well, helping those other architects to say, “don’t go there with that idea”, because we know what we have discussed in other meetings leading up to this point. So, we are going to be your best advocate, I hope.

Hastings – If we reach a consensus here by mid-January, is that timely enough?

Holloway – We are going to be submitting things and I think mid-January is probably not timely enough. I would say the end of December is probably as late as we can go in terms of consensus. Because we want to submit that last RFP package to Washington so that we are ready to go out with the RFP by January 13, 2005.

Newstadt – Am I correct in assuming that you have only come up with three conceptual renderings and you want a consensus from this Commission? May I ask why it was limited to just three concepts?

Holloway – Because there are lots of architectural styles in the world, we just try to minimize the number of choices we give. If we were the final architect of record, we would go through iterations until everybody was happy, in terms of the people we report to. But because this is a guideline package that is going to be given to a builder and architect, we want to gather that expertise of the builder into the process. He may say, well if you use this kind of roof, it is going to cost more than if you use this kind of a roof. So, we want to try and get some input on that type of process from another architect. So all we are trying to do is get some general sense of the imagery that you are going to be comfortable with. And already we got some really good feedback, so we know the kinds of things people are saying.

Thompson – Is that double deckers there in the middle?

Holloway – What we are showing here is that we would like the entrance spaces to be higher, as we saw in Lawton and Norman to a lesser extent. But you walk into a space that might have a skylight in it and be a little bit grand. Then as you get into the wings, it is one story. The whole thing is a one-story plan. But think about the dining area, you would want to have some degree of height. Now in balancing with the budget, we want it to have the maximum height we can and still keep within the budget, because it costs money to heat and cool that volume. No matter what scheme we pick, we want those center spaces to be high.

Thompson – Perhaps I may need to see the blueprints. Right now, it is beginning to look more like a hospital than a simple Veterans Home. Our original concept was simplicity, because it is their home and not a hospital.

Holloway – I would agree with that. I think if you have a chance to look at it more closely, you would see that all of them have a degree of positives and negatives.

Carroll – I guess what they were trying to do is get away from that school look.

Holloway – We are trying to get away from that institution look. Also, the State Facilities Management group, as a rule, shies away from the flat roofs for maintenance issues. So we are showing pitched roofs on most of the spaces. Not to say there will not be some flat areas for mechanical units.

Hastings – We need to come to some kind of consensus by the end of December for the RFP.

Holloway – Another thing I would like to view with you quickly, is our latest floor plan.

Homer – Just a point of reference, the Steering Committee represents citizens basically, and the Steering Committee chose the Victorian.

Hastings – Are you planning on having the Steering meeting every Wednesday throughout December?

Homer – Yes, except we are not having it tomorrow.

Newstadt – If the Steering Group has chosen the Victorian, then what impact of the consensus does this group have?

Homer – It was just a poll that we took. Certainly if you had a different idea, we would reconsider it in the Steering Committee. We told them we would bring it to you and if you disagree with that, then the Steering Committee would reconsider, and I can guarantee they will put a lot on that.

Hastings – Just for informational purposes, non-binding, how many of you prefer #2 as your first choice, #1 as your first choice, anyone prefer #3? (Informal vote taken)

Magner – Can they do some massaging on #2, especially the entrance way. The chapel looks more prominent, and you want the entrance to look more prominent.

Holloway – Yes, this is not final. These are imageries, but people react to styles. We wanted the reaction to the style and a lot of this stuff will be massaged to bring it into budget.

Hastings – Keep in mind that this is a two-dimensional rendering and the final product will most certainly look different than what you see there. In keeping with the history and culture of the State, I think #2 certainly fits with that.

Holloway – I am glad you noticed; we tried very hard. Instead of making it look like Legislative Hall in Milford, or make it look like some big mansion, we tried to make it look like it fits in with the community. It is a semi-rural area still and we do not want it to jump out and be out of place. I think the idea we are playing up on the front is the idea of a front porch. One of the ideas we saw on our tour were these guys who come out front and greet people coming in and out, and it is a very friendly atmosphere. Instead of making it feel like a carport, we wanted to make it feel like a porch that happened to be a carport. The carport is required by code to let people on and off under shelter. But the idea of making it feel like a front porch once you get in it is important to use to soften it.

Hastings – OK Commissioners, between now and Christmas, bounce this off your executive boards or members that you phone, or however you need to do it, and get their input as to whether they prefer a Georgian Style, Victorian Style, or whatever. Try to get a feel as to what their preferences are and hopefully come to a consensus so that by the Steering Committee meeting the Wednesday prior to Christmas, we can let them know our preference. We are not going to have time to have a full-scale referendum on the thing. But if the informal poll we just took in here means anything, it sounds like the majority kind of like the Victorian.

Holloway – I respect the fact that you want to give your constituents a chance to voice their opinion too. I don't think this group has seen the most recent plan. I think we have seen the site plan and that was two weeks ago and I think that is a forgone plan. This is the most recent floor plan of the building and I do have a more up-to-date one, where we are starting to show doors in all these spaces. What we have done is revisited and tried to make the chapel more prominent part of the entrance way or so it would stand out. Then we moved the administrative suite, previously it was on this side and we moved it over here. It has the same schedule of spaces, they are just in slightly different places on this plan. We have four wings now, and I think it is two wings of 30 and two wings of 45. We were going on the direction of making one of these L shaped wings the dementia wing and then the other L shaped wing will be a regular wing and then if we have a growth in the dementia population, we can easily convert this wing into more Alzheimer's care. That creates what we call a walkabout for the Alzheimer's patients. We can protect that area with a fence and the idea would be to landscape that courtyard. Then we have the two T-shaped wings with the main nursing stations at the intersections of T and the L shapes. The Alzheimer's has its own dining and then we would have a main dining area. We would have a multipurpose area, which is adjacent to the dining area, so it would have a folding wall so we can blend the two rooms together if we wanted to have a big activity (describes building layout and specifics using charts).

Hastings – The Steering group meets every Wednesday, except it will not meet tomorrow, and you are all invited to sit in on that. Mr. Carroll has sat in on several meetings. In order for them to meet their timelines, as you heard the RFP is supposed to be released in late December, we need to give them timely input. If you have any objections or differences of opinion with which style this thing should be, you need to get it resolved by Christmas.

Spera – Most of you know who I am, Paul Spera from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Office, Secretary Principi. It has been a while since I have had the opportunity to come down to one of your Commission meetings. I was down here in Dover for the VFW Conference and the timing worked out perfect, so I stayed over and visited the Medical Center and the Regional Office. The Secretary is very pleased with the progress of your Home down here. Obviously, from some of the participation he has had in Delaware in the past on the subject of the Home, he is looking forward to progress here. The only other couple of items I wanted to mention: first, we in the VA, are facing a lot of challenges. The CARES progress has moved on to its next phase. There will not be a lot of change down here in the Delaware area, but there will be some changes made up in Philadelphia. There are some parts of the country, where beginning on January 1, 2005, there will be special committees. For instance, the Boston system, we have four medical centers up there and there is talk of consolidating all four into one huge super hospital. The budget, to my understanding right now, is about to be signed as a part of an omnibus bill. It looks like congress is once again going to be generous to the tune of \$1.5B over what the

President asked for, not quite what the system needs, but a lot better than what we were going to get. We are waiting for all this omnibus stuff to get rapped up. The good thing for VA is we are going to have a budget now, not in March or April, where we end up losing five or six months out of the year and are not really able to do anything. The last item, with Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the challenges that are facing us today are rather enormous. Not as much as some people say, as far as putting a strain on the system. We have the ability to care for the veterans that are coming back, and on the positive side of that, you need to know if you do not already, VA is very actively involved in the Bethesda Naval Hospital and Walter Reed Army Hospital and in various other places. VA personnel are there helping to walk through the transfer for those individuals who are going from active duty to the VA for care. We are trying to make sure they do not fall through the cracks; we are trying to make sure they almost get hand walked from one place to the next. So there is a lot of that going on and there are a lot of military that are being discharged and separated. We have separation points where the Secretary sent out approximately 300,000 letters to recently separated veterans advising them of their rights and advising them of what they are entitled to. We have become very proactive for this generation of veterans. Much different than our generations as we went through, VA sat there and waited for us to go to them for help. Where as now, VA is reaching out to these people and making sure that they come to us very early while they still have fresh memories, and while their medical records are still there. Things are much better for them than it was for those of us who were Vietnam and other eras, a lot of that stuff was gone when we finally needed it. There is some question as to what the Secretary is going to do, nobody knows. There are some people that believe he will not stay for a second term, so that is a very distinct possibility. There are a lot of people who hope that he does, just to see some of the things through, like CARES and others that he began. He has made it clear that until the time comes that he has the opportunity to sit with the President and find out what he wants him to do, he has not made any decision on the future. If anyone has any questions, I would be happy to try and answer them.

Thompson – You have mentioned that we are pretty safe in this area, but how about Philadelphia, that could affect us indirectly?

Spera – No, most of the areas in VISN4, which are Pennsylvania, Delaware, and parts of Southern New Jersey, if there are any changes, they will be increases. There are going to be increases in services, and I believe it is Philadelphia that is going to get the spinal cord injuries. The only disruption, if you would, is going to be up in the Pittsburgh area where they are going to combine three hospitals down to two.

Hastings – Isn't that sort of a national trend, to consolidate a number of hospitals and expand the number of clinics?

Spera – It is. We have about 870 clinics now and about 150 on the drawing board. That is the future of the delivery of medical care now. So we are moving very much toward that. What we are doing is, and I will use the Pittsburgh area as an example since that has pretty much been settled, you have a great deal of difficulty in justifying the cost of keeping three huge hospitals open when you can consolidate into two and replace the third one with a modern and up-to-date clinic. So that is exactly what is taking place. The only thing we are trying to do is follow the 30 mile/30 minute rule, is it within 30 miles or 30 minutes to primary care in the VA. We are about 93-94% on top of that and it is in rural areas out in the Midwest and the West that we are having problems, and even up in places like Northern Maine and Northern Michigan.

Newstadt – What is the current status on the VA hospital accepting hospitalization plans, HMOs, private insurances, etc. From what I understand they do not. The last time I inquired, a veteran could not offset the \$55 or \$60 in category 7, that the cost would not be passed on to the individual's hospitalization insurance.

Spera – We do try to collect every dollar that we can from insurers. One of the problems that we do have with HMOs is you have to have a contract with the HMO and VA does not have contracts. Other private insurers, we are going after them as much as we possibly can. The large part of the budget for these medical centers comes from these funds.

Newstadt – Still no HMOs?

Spera – No HMOs, it is difficult for us to be able to do that.

Newstadt – Is the VA continuing to not issue drugs on scripts other than that which is written within the VA?

Spear – Yes, that is still continuing. There are various plans that are at various stages. The feeling has been all along that if you talk to the health care providers in the VA, they want the system to be a full service provider for health care. You get the answer that we are not a CVS, we are not a drug store, and we are not a pharmacy, that is not what we are there for. You get the other side of it from the legal part of it, and there are questions on legal liabilities. So they are trying to work a lot

of that out and what the future is going to be on that, I frankly do not know, and I don't think anybody does right now. So for the foreseeable future, there is not a plan to change that.

Morris – I am encouraged by your comments about contact interaction with the current veteran population coming back, with all the disheartening news reports we have seen on veterans that need prosthesis work, surgery, and all that nature. Generally, what I am seeing in the news is that our medical facilities, both active duty and VA, are very much in action with those people that are coming back and need that assistance. Where almost all their problems that they pinpoint, are the subsequent problems after release; trying to get them integrated back into the community, taking up for the loss of income, and things of that nature. So I am very happy to hear that the VA is working with the active veterans.

Spera – There is one area we all have to be conscious of, and perhaps through our own sphere of influence we may be able to assist with, is that we are seeing more and more PTSD cases coming than we ever have before. As an unintended consequence of the body armor, we are getting more people who are coming back. We have less deaths and a lot more very serious injuries that we need to deal with. If you watch the news and read the papers, you realize the type of pressure cooker that the troops in Iraq are under. A lot of them are coming back with problems in PTSD, and what we need to do as individuals, is to reach out to those we know and the families of those individuals. We cannot let them not come in for the services they should be coming in for. We cannot let them feel that there is some sort of stigma attached to it; we have got to get them now. The Vietnam generation went a long time before it was recognized and before we got the treatment. We lost a lot of good people and we had a lot of trouble bringing people back from where they were. We do not want that to happen, so I guess what I am saying is, whether it is the American Legion, VFW, or whatever organization, or whether it is in your own neighborhood or family, if you know of individuals that have served there, families need to know there are signs they have to be watching for. There is a spot on the VA website that you can go to that will give you some of those signs. We need to get that message out, so we ask you to help us do that.

Carroll – I want to thank you for the information that you put out and I receive it. Not all do we print out and carry forward, but it is very timely and I appreciate your efforts in doing that. The other issue is the parking facility at Elsmere. I have been in meetings where this has been brought up many times, and they are talking of taking away this or doing that, or re-adjusting, and I have also heard an answer to this question. That it isn't time for a parking garage. I am told that VISN4 does not feel that Wilmington is worth that investment. But it is a real chore to get in on certain days.

Spera – There is a new director coming on board either this week or next. I will certainly bring the message back to Elsmere and Sherri DeSable and let them know what your concerns are.

Carroll – This has been addressed before at meetings and they were all high level meetings. It is felt before that VISN4 just couldn't justify a parking garage in Wilmington.

Spera – Well, it can't hurt to have someone ask them to respond to it again.

Morris – You can ask for the moon and hope to get something. Most everyone enters through the back parking lot and it is scary in the winter because of ice and rain, everything goes right down to that level. So if some kind of walkway or something would be a help to get the people out of the weather sooner.

Spera - I was there yesterday and I know exactly what you talking about.

Carroll – They have a type of escort service to pick up veterans in the parking area and return them, that is underway now.

Spera – I have only been there a few times over the years, so obviously I do not go there often. Is there also a need for more parking spaces?

Everyone – Yes!

Spera – I will certainly bring that issue up.

Harden – That problem of the parking garage came up a few years ago and they said they did not have the space for it. They were talking about trying to get rid of some of the homes in the back of the hospital to try and perhaps work on something of this sort. But they are hoping now, by getting rid of the tennis courts in the back there, it will give them more parking and they are working on that now.

Webb – Now that the Regional Office is involved with Philadelphia, that parking area is now full of nurses and doctors from the hospital. When we go down there to park, there are no spaces because the employees have them.

Spera – The one right outside the Regional Office?

Webb – Yes.

Spera – The signs all say parking for clients.

Webb – The parking lot is full of everybody that works there.

Magner – The back road is more or less for anybody. But like Webb said, most of the doctors and nurses get there early and they take up the whole back row. I park in that back row. I don't have to start work until 8:30, but I am there at 6:30 just so that I get a parking space, because some mornings with my bad knees, I just cannot make it from the lower lot.

Hastings – October meeting minutes, any corrections?

Harden – I have a couple of them; on page six, the second paragraph where you are speaking, it says moments, it should be monuments. The large paragraph below on line 13, the word were should be where.

Magner – I received mine yesterday.

Carroll – They were handed to me on Wednesday. I guess they went in the mail the next morning.

Davila – We can take the rap for the misspelling or whatever, but we cannot take it for the US Mail.

Hastings – Does anyone else have any changes to the minutes?

Ennis – I made some comments last meeting on behalf of the KWVA, about all the work that has been done and all the progress and I don't see any of those comments in the minutes. If it is not necessary, then maybe we shouldn't say it, but I made quite an extensive statement to everybody working hard and identifying people and agencies.

Davila – We will check that out.

**MOTION BY WEBB TO ACCEPT OCTOBER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS CORRECTED,
SECONDED BY MAGNER, MOTION CARRIED.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Newstadt – I would like to make as a matter of record for the minutes, the clarification on the choice of the plaque for the Cemetery. Because of the limitations of letters that you could place on a bronze plaque, the bronze plaque was not one of the options that the Family Advisory Cemetery Committee (FACC) voted on. If in fact they had been given the opportunity, there is some probability they would have voted for the bronze, but the Committee understands that because of the length of the inscriptions and number of characters to be placed on the new plaques, that bronze was not feasible. However, they wanted to make sure, and that is why I am adding this to the minutes today, that people understand that there was no rejections by the Committee of the bronze plaque, it was a matter that the bronze plaque could not be voted upon because of those limitations.

Hastings – The plastic have already been ordered.

Newstadt – No, nothing had been ordered. There was a variety of plaques at the meeting that the Committee could vote on.

Hasting – I thought Tony Davila said the plaques had already been ordered?

Newstadt – No, not prior to the meeting.

Morris – In the minutes of May it says, we have already ordered marker bases and are in the process of ordering the markers.

Newstadt – Bases. But the final ordering was not done until the selection of the Committee at the FACC meeting. Is that clear?

Hastings – Do you wish to reopen the issue?

Newstadt – Negative. At the behest of a committee member, he wanted to make sure that people understood that the bronze was not up for selection. I will be meeting on November 30, 2004, with the Sussex County FACC, no issues at this time. However, we intend to continue regular meetings so that we keep the lines of communication open with both Sussex and New Castle County cemetery folks.

Hastings – What time is that?

Newstadt – I believe we made it for Tuesday, November 30, 2004, at 6:00 pm at the Cemetery.

Magner - That is the same day as the budget meeting; the budget meeting is on November 30, 2004, at 9:00 am.

Hastings – Please try to get as many folks there as we can, back up the Secretary of State in trying to get as many things as she can for the Veterans Commission, including the service officer for New Castle County.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Thompson – The next event will be Memorial Day.

Kitson – VFW has it.

Hastings – I think the Veterans Day ceremony went great. One comment about it, which should be addressed to the River & Bay Authority, they had only one Port-a-John there this time, and they had a bigger crowd than previous years.

Kitson – I checked about that while I was there. The other one had a leak and they had to take it back.

Magner - There were comments about having additional port-a-potties there.

Carroll – On November 4, 2004, down in Georgetown, the VVA dedicated their memorial and I was able to attend that ceremony. It is a shame it was raining as hard as it was. I want to make mention that it was a very nice ceremony, it was well done, and the speakers had nice messages for everyone.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Carroll – The majority of this meeting has been taken up with the subject matter of the Veterans Home. The monies in the Veterans Home Fund total \$98,718.49, as of November 19, 2004.

Hastings – So additional money has come in since the last meeting?

Carroll – Yes. Another issue I would like to relay is the director that has been chosen for the VA Center up in Elsmere is a gentleman who had very high marks on the Search Committee's ranking. He will come on board this month, his name is Richard S. Citron. I was asked to be part of that committee, sitting in for Tony Davila, when it was in the Wilmington phase of it. This man comes with great experience and I will just run through this quickly (reads biography). We feel that we have an excellent selection in the new administrator.

Davila – I met Mr. Citron up in Chicago when I was part of the Secretary’s Committee on Minority Issues out of Central Office VA. At the time, he was working for Joan Cummings from VISN12, she was the VISN director up there. He seemed to be a very nice gentleman, so I think that we have made a very good choice.

Glasby- Just as a reminder, the Veterans Upward Bound program offers math, English, Spanish and computers for veterans, non-credit courses, but it does not cost the veteran anything. Something I am looking at in the summertime, and don’t quote me on it yet, but I am looking at a golf tournament, the Veterans Commanders Cup, for the veterans organizations and have a trophy.

Davila – The Commission was instrumental in helping to establish the Upward Bound Program in Delaware.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

No report.

PERSONNEL

Davila – We advertise on November 29, 2004, in the Sussex County newspapers for the Conservation Tech position down state.

Hastings – How many vacancies?

Davila – Just one position down state. We have some casual/seasonal positions available up state.

GROUND BREAKING & DEDICATION

Morris – I met with Tony Davila and he briefed you on the last meeting we had. Subsequently we held off, because Tony Davila mentioned to me that since Gloria Homer’s group is obviously running the show on getting this thing set up, we need to coordinate with her and her group before we go off on our own on the groundbreaking. She may have some plans, and obviously Milford has some plans, so we haven’t gone any farther with that. I spoke with Tony Davila this morning on the entrenching tool and we both have been on the internet and found a site with the same price. His place is out of state, which has a cover. I have a place in state, but it does not have a cover. We will make a decision on that pretty soon. He also found a place that we can have a commemorative pin made that we can give out for everybody that attends. I think it is a great idea, so we are looking at putting together a design for a pin. Other than that, we are sort of on hold until we find out where we are going to go, and I do not want to step on anybody’s toes, especially on the legislative side. Once we find that out, we can get the word out and start working on that.

Davila – If you recall at our last meeting, Mr. Carmean indicated he would work with us to put some kind of platform out there if it rained or something along those lines. He is willing to work with us to make sure it is a nice event.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Kitson – I got some information from Bill Carroll this morning, so I am going to be checking into it. I understand that Tom Daws from VVA has a list of all the Vietnam Memorials in the State, so I will get with him.

Davila – A follow up on the WWII memorial that has been advertised in *The Centurion*. I am sure you have all seen that about an idea for an artist rendition or some kind of drawing. The closing date on that is December 15, 2004. If we get any models, drawings, or sketches, it will be included with the discussion I will have with Pete Gerardi over at Facilities Management, to follow up on that. We have to have a report into the legislature no later than May 2005 concerning sites and potential cost for this project.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Wasson (DELVETS) – I think about a year ago we got a notice on a trumpet that was available. I just wanted to mention that the Delaware Veterans have bought one and we have used it very successfully. We always play taps at the end of our meetings and I can recommend that for your organizations.

Hastings - What was your cost?

Wasson – It was a little pricey, I think it was in the \$500-\$600 price range.

Newstadt (JWV) – I would like to present, on the behalf of the Department of Delaware, Jewish War Veterans, another contribution toward the Home of \$1,000. I can assure you that this is not the last contribution that the organization will make. This will make it a total of \$11,000 that JWV has contributed.

Kitson (VFW) – We just had our Eastern State Conference this past weekend here in Dover. The next big thing is the Red, White, and Blue Gala, which is January 22, 2005, at the Sheraton. Tickets cost \$35 each. See me to order tickets.

Hastings – Do you have a big crowd so far?

Kitson – Pretty good size crowd so far. Right now, we are just under the \$20,000 notch. So we still have a ways to go to beat last year.

Hastings -Who are the speakers? Is the Governor coming?

Kitson – If you are volunteering, not a problem. I have not heard back from our Governor yet on whether she is going to be attending or not. She will probably not be there since it is a smoking event.

Hastings – There will be smoking?

Kitson - Yes sir, it is a private function.

Thompson (MCL) – Right now, four of the five detachments are busy with the Toys-for-Tots program, along with the Marine Corps Reserve in the Wilmington area. This program will last probably until December 20, 2004, when all of us, in our various ways, will start passing things out.

Hastings (MOWW) – At the MOWW luncheon a couple of weeks ago, General Frank Ianni gave a very nice briefing on the WWII memorial. He had a bunch of slides and stuff and gave a very nice history. They ran into a lot of obstacles to get that thing built, and it is very beautiful.

Morris (American Legion) – The commander is finalizing the collection for his items for the American Legion Post in Florida. They were specifically targeting those people that did not have second homes, but whose primary homes were in Florida. The National organization has stopped the regional workshops they had for leadership and training for upcoming officers, so the organizations are doing that now locally. Tony Davila was gracious enough to go with me on a Saturday morning and we spoke before the Ladies Auxiliary for the American Legion. I am embarrassed that the ladies put out almost twice as many members as the guys do when they have meetings. They were very attentive and inquisitive about the information we had. Tony was able to bring the charts and that makes a big difference when you are speaking to people. The ladies promised to put a lot of pressure on a lot of people to get things to continue moving in the area of the control of the Veterans Home. After that meeting, I have been invited to a couple more. It is great this year that I am not the finance officer. I can get around and do a lot more things. Recently at some of our meetings, I have been picking up new things I need to bring up under new business. Tony Davila, I have the letter from the gentleman who penned the poem we decided we are going to put in. I have his approval. I will give that to you for the file. He has graciously given us permission to reproduce in anyway we see fit. Rodger's Graphics in Georgetown is going to donate a rendition of that poem, suitably framed for hanging up in the Home. He will provide me with a couple of examples before we make the final decision.

Carroll (MOPH) – I would like to announce that changes within our National organization is ongoing. As of November 22, 2004, a gentleman by the name of Jack Leonard, has been appointed to be the National Service Director by our National Commander. This confirmation must be approved by the NEC. I plan to go to our National headquarters on Monday and bring back the last bronze plaque that was cast of a group. We have one in our Sussex Cemetery, one in our Bear Cemetery, and there is one in the Delaware Academy. The casting was made through efforts of the Cemetery staff with the foundry some years ago. It started in 1996 and there is one left in supply. I plan to go down and bring that back and hopefully we will find a place in our Veterans Home for the display of this bronze plaque. There has been talk, and we have discussed in the Steering Committee and other places, that the entrance to our Veterans Home could very well be an application where monuments could be placed. An avenue of flags nicely landscaped and so on. There is an indication from the National organization that there is a monument which was dedicated, and there is one at the bridge, that we might

be able to come across one of those again. That is all in the future. I was able to make two presentations on the Veterans Home, one in the New Castle area, and one down in Sussex County last Saturday. It was surprising the number of questions I received, mostly from widows and widowers. What would be the plan in the future if I should like to have a stained glass window in memory of my wife, that type of thing. They gave out copies of the list, I did not go through the projected cost of what these things would be. I think we need to look at how we want to handle these requests.

Hastings - Do the Veterans Homes across the nation have By-laws, or charters, or what have you?

Davila – Some do.

Hastings – Does that need to be done before an administrator can be hired?

Thompson – We do not know under what agency it is going to be. I am sure they will want to have their own By-laws.

Newstadt – We had some discussion about this if you remember three or four meetings ago. It is almost premature until we see the design in its final stage before we start talking about specific donations. Because for the most part, I think we all agree, that the donations would be quality of life donations; the computers, TVs, exercise equipment, those kinds of things. Until we see what the space criteria is and what the State is or is not going to pay for, the quality of life issues are really difficult to get specific. I have been briefing people who have spoken to me on that very issue. When we find out what the needs are and the quality of life issues, then we can get that straight.

Hastings – The Steering Group has had a lot of decisions and Tony Davila has been up to his elbows deciding which equipment was operating equipment and which was part of the construction budget, and so forth. Because whatever is in the construction budget is a 65/35 Federal/State split and the \$99,000 that has been donated can translate into \$200,000 on the federal side, if you use it for construction. If you use the \$99,000 for just quality of life things that are not part of the construction, then you do not get that 2/3 additional plug from the administration. The hiring of the administrator will not take place until 6 months prior.

Davila – January or February next year.

Hastings – It's this coming year? I thought it was much later than that.

Davila – We already have the job application.

Hastings – So by late winter or early spring, we should be in a position to start putting together rules for operation, or By-laws, or whatever needs to be done. We need to get some samples from other states to use as a starting point.

Davila – We have some of that information here already. The real issue is to wait until the new administrator comes on and see what experiences that person has had in the Veterans Home administration. We can work with that person to get the SOP established and the entrance criteria. We have to start looking at that seriously, especially if we are doing Medicaid and Medicare. I have been doing some additional work with the VA in the last week. At our last meeting, we were talking about the number of dementia patients. VA tells me they have 34 patients up there right now, who have some form of dementia. However, they are not what the VA calls locked ward type patients. If we are looking at two wards of 30, and we are initially discussing a ward of 30 for domiciliary care and 30 for dementia care, we are actually going to outfit 2 of 30 wards for dementia. Will every one of those patients want to come to the Veterans Home? That is questionable. Will a certain portion want to come? We can be sure of that. So we have to look at that and say if 10 or 15 come, that is half of a ward. We have to look at the number of domiciliary individuals that we will take in that will reside in one of those wards. If we have to move into the second ward, then we are going to have to look at how we are going to handle domiciliary care.

Morris – That is also going to have a major impact on your staffing ratio.

Davila – We have already looked at that on several occasions. We have upped CNAs to 98.5 from about 91 or 92, and we have look at RNs, and things along that line. We are still maintaining the 280.5 positions on staff. Jack Askin from the Delaware Home for the Chronically Ill indicates there are about 40 or so that are veterans that would want to come.

Hastings – I encourage any of you who can make it, to drop in on that Wednesday Steering Group Meeting, it is very enlightening.

Newstadt – I would like tell you about an informal meeting I had with the Chairman of the Vermont State Veterans Home. Were you guys in Vermont at all?

Davila – No, we did not go to Vermont as a group.

Newstadt – There were two points that he made rather strenuously with me and said please take that back to your Commission. When I described what we were going to build as a Veterans Home and not hospital, he said that it will evolve into a more hospital oriented facility. Because as your veterans age, their health requirements become more and more severe. In fact, you will be faced with providing a level of care that is analogous with a hospital. He said it is well and good that you do not want to call it a hospital, but eventually you will be faced with that. The second point he made, that I thought was rather unique, and Tony Davila may have run into this in his experience, they have developed the quid pro quo with the VA, in return for providing space in their State Veterans Home for a VA physician and a small number of staff. They in fact have been able to get a level of medical care basically free with this quid pro quo. So for x-number of days a month, the doctor is in residence there, operating a small VA clinic in which non-institutional veterans may use of course. But it gives them a real advantage of having a doctor on the premises at times. I do not know how we feel about that, but if it is feasible, I think it is a very good idea.

Davila – I recommended to the Steering Committee that we meet with VA, so we met with all the individuals that are responsible for accrediting our Home. We went up there last Monday or Tuesday and met with the acting director, chief of staff, and staff. We talked about the Veterans Home and they made some good recommendations concerning medical records and the electronics system. I have already set up an appointment for next Monday at 1:30 PM to bring people from the Chronically Ill, one or two people from Bill's staff, and Larry from Facilities Management, to look at their electronic recordkeeping. We may want to consider a wireless system, so we are going to look at what they have up there now in place and see how much is actually generated by paper and how much is electronic. Where if you are dealing with a patient, you can have the computer right there and go right into their records and so forth. On the equipment list, we have 150 computers, and I said we only need 66 computers by the number of staff assigned to positions right now. As a result, let's take the rest of them and turn them into laptops, so the people walking around the wards, the CNAs, RNs, or doctors, can take a laptop to the patient's room and put in all the information. The VA recommended that you could also have these fold down little desks that are outside the room that you could plug into if you were not using the wireless. If you look at a primary care team at our Veterans Home, there is a good possibility that the VA would want to put in a CBOC (Community Based Outpatient Clinic).

Hastings – Good, I think that is something we should very vigorously pursue as soon as we get the Veterans Home put to bid. You were talking about docking stations and such, and this is a big issue down state, because as you go further down the peninsula, they do not have extensive cable networks. They are pursuing contracts right now to establish a wireless network and we are on the threshold of really having a sophisticated nationwide wireless network. You can hard wire a new building with fiber optics for a quarter of the cost it takes to go back and add it later after you got the building built.

Davila – The main avenue, Airport Road, is already fiber optic ready, in the sense that they have laid cable there already, and we could hook into their fiber optics. I have already mentioned that to the architect. The issue of having a primary care team here, whether they build their own facility or they are co-located with us, they pay for that and we would have to enter into a sharing agreement with them. We might be able to enter the formulary and possibly buy drugs from them, so there are some good positive things we are already beginning to establish with VA.

Magner (AMVETS) – On November 4, 2004, we picked up our turkeys and delivered 135 of them to the VA Hospital. In talking to Karen, they were supposed to be delivered prior to this week. The family is provided with a food voucher along with each turkey. They will have enough groceries to make a nice meal. 75 of the turkeys were distributed between New Jersey, Maryland, and lower Delaware. Saturday, December 4, 2004, 10:00 AM, AMVETS Department of Delaware is having their first DEC meeting. It is going to be held right here in the Commission office. For those of you who are not members, you are welcome to join.

Newstadt – What does DEC stand for?

Magner – That is you State Commander, State officers, and Post Commanders.

Davila – You might want to tell them who Karen is and what she does.

Magner – Karen Cavanaugh is the VAVS Coordinator of VA Volunteer Services. She is involved in everything that pertains to the volunteers. She is going to be retiring in June of next year. We already offered her a job, she is looking for a part-time job, and I need a secretary, and she is willing.

Ennis (KWVA) – I think the ceremony at the Bridge went very well, it was the biggest attendance I have seen up there since I have been going. I want to commend Jim Thompson, Tony Davila, and the staff who were involved in it. It was a wonderful day! The choir did a wonderful job. We did end up with a couple of speakers, it had to happen, I guess, with the politicians. That night, I went to the Cheer Center down in Georgetown and attended their annual Veterans Day ceremony and dinner. It was fantastic! They had the color guards, honor guards, and they recognized all the services. The veterans and their spouses were welcome to attend with a minimal cost. All the veterans were free and the place was packed. I did attend as a member of the Commission.

Davila – Just for general knowledge, Brinks Security was actually registering all the cars that were coming in with their clickers. We had 450 automobiles at the bridge. We had about 750 people up there.

Carroll – Was there a count on the dinner?

Davila – We had 120 for the luncheon.

Harden – So you feel we can we continue with that?

Davila – Yes, we can do it again. We have already received the contract for next year.

Carroll – I would like to interject something about the ceremonies there at the luncheon. The Daimler Chrysler Corporation donated \$50,000 to the WWII Veterans History Project. The Lt. Governor and Tony Davila were there to accept the check.

Harden – Is this Commission group going to appoint the administrator for the Home? Who is going to hire that individual?

Davila – Right now, it looks like it is being handled out of the Secretary of State's office. I have received quite a few job descriptions from around the country. Al Carter and I sat down and actually put the job description together. Now we presented the job description to the Committee and they will come back and tell us if they want to change anything. They will not be part of the merit system, and in essence, will serve at the pleasure of. You should have a copy of the job description in your folder (discussed job description).

Newstadt – When we go to hire the individual, will we in fact at that time, have some reasonable assurance that he or she will know who they are working for?

Davila – That is a very good question. No decisions have been made by the Governor, who is going to be responsible for the veterans. We hope that that decision will be made shortly.

Hastings – I have met with the Secretary of State prior to our October meeting and she wants her and me to go to the Governor, she had said right after the election. I have not heard anything from her yet, but I am going to call her and set up an appointment soon.

Carroll – In reference to Ron Williams' editorial, most all saw that in the Wilmington News Journal. The essence in the last two paragraphs was that Ms. Homer and Harriet Smith Windsor were probably not going to be in the administration forthcoming. Where that information came from, I do not know. I have asked others and they are not aware of it.

NEW BUSINESS

Morris – As I have been speaking at my Legion meetings, we are all tickled to death we are moving forward on the Home. As we saw today, it takes up a significant amount of time for the Veterans Commission. We have had a lot of stuff put on the back burner. One issue is the State of Delaware exempts military retirement pay at \$2,000, and only when you reach the age of 60, do I think that changes. There is a significant amount of retirement community here, and veterans that I am talking to want us to start discussing that issue with the State. Since we have a Joint Veterans Legislative Committee, that is an area we can bring that to. Secondly, my company that I work for transports people up and down the State. One of the things that takes a lot of pressure off of that, is the DAV, American Legion, and other veterans organizations are transporting veterans to and from the VA system. As everybody knows, and I talked to our director this morning in DART,

the costs are going up. It may not seem to be a large amount of money, but the E-Z Pass system in the State is a \$4 round trip for anyone going up and down outside of Dover. I would like to also bring to the table for the next discussion time, an exemption for veterans organizations that transport those people. We know we are probably not going to get an exemption on the fuel, because I know that our company does not pay the State taxes. The \$4, or \$20 a week, 52 weeks of the year, tends to be a significant cost for a volunteer organization. So, I want to start looking into an E-Z Pass exemption. Another issue that I would like to discuss affects probably not as many of our own veterans, but the veterans who come to this State to work. This space in Dover is a significant part of our community and so forth. As our State Veterans Service Officer, Bob McBride, brought to my attention, the State of Delaware is one of the few states that does not provide in-state tuition assistance to those veterans assigned to the State of Delaware and who want to continue their education through the existing Delaware system. I am not exactly sure of all the wording on this; I've got something here that I will give to Tony Davila.

Davila – That is not true.

Morris – I'm not sure of the wording, so I may not be stating it right. Lastly, I received in the mail a handwritten document, like e-mail, I am a little leery of opening things I do not know of. But, I received something from family and friends of the Congressional Medal of Honor, have you seen that?

Davila – The gentleman was down here two or three years ago and provided a presentation. Eric Loveless came down to each of you to fold over the flag and talked about that. Well, Eric and this gentleman have established this new Medal of Honor to sort of counteract the other negative publicity that was going around with the other groups and so forth. So they have now created a website and they are working on developing this platform to generate understanding of Medal of Honor recipients and those in Delaware who have received the Medal of Honor.

Magner – There is another organization out there called The Order of The Silver Rose that is trying to push legislation to give Purple Hearts to veterans that die of like Agent Orange exposure, and I do not think that is going to pass.

Hastings – For those items that require legislative action, could you write those up in some form that we can present to Paul Lardizzone at the December meeting?

Morris – I wanted to get them into the meeting minutes and as an item for discussion.

Hastings – I need to appoint this committee for naming the entrance boulevard, side streets, and a recommendation for the park. Does anyone want to volunteer? I have asked Bill Carroll to Chair this committee and he has agreed.

Davila – That committee is going to have to work closely with you and me, only so that we will be able to find out how many streets we are going to have.

Hasting – What I would like to do is recognize all the wars in which we have been involved if that is possible, so it shouldn't be confined to just a single era. We do not know how many streets or what kind they are going to be. We are led to believe the main road going in is going to be a wide boulevard so you can see the Veterans Home all the way from Airport Road. They gave us an opportunity to name the whole site, the whole 90 acres. I would like to see us come up with two or three recommendations for each of those. We should come up with a fairly lengthy list of recommended names for the side streets; which could be names of battles, names of Delawareans that earned the Medal of Honor, or a number of things. You develop the criteria so we can have something to turn over to them by the end of January.

Carroll – Who all is on this committee?

Hastings – Kitson, Webb, Harden, Magner, and Wasson.

Davila – I suggest you start considering the entrance criteria at this point. I know you had talked at some length about different Veterans Homes and Rich Magner did something on the computer. We might want to revisit that and start looking at that seriously. Once we break ground in May or June next year, we will start the waiting list.

Thompson – If it is assigned to us.

Davila – One way or another, we will have enough influence that you can be assured that the new administrator starts the waiting list. If there are recommendations from the Commission as to what should be on the criteria for that waiting list, I suggest we start looking at that.

Magner - You know the VA is going to feed us people.

Davila – We do not have to take them. But, the idea is that it is highly recommended we take them since they pay per diem and everything else. Of course we are talking about sharing agreements and it would be nice if we had a good working agreement with them.

Carroll – Is it possible to get a new directory of the State Homes?

Davila – I will see if I can get a new copy of that directory. If not, we will download what they have from the website.

Hastings – Budget meeting at 9:00 AM, next Tuesday, at the Tatnall building. In reference to whether or not there were any historical or archeological artifacts that would cause a delay or any other obstacle on the site, a letter has been sent by the Delaware State Historical Preservation Office to Mr. Salvas, Department of Veterans Affairs, saying everything is good to go. Last meeting, we talked about the Faulk Manor North requested a speaker; they wanted it for Veterans Day. We said we could not do it on Veterans Day and asked them if another day would be suitable. They came back and said December 14th was good for them, or they could arrange another day. Anyone here want to volunteer for that? You would be talking to about 50 folks.

Webb – On November 12, 2004, I went to Easter Seals for an hour meeting with approximately 35 to 40 people. It was a question and answer thing. It went pretty good. It was the most I have talked in about 3 or 4 years. They were real happy with the pins I gave them, and they gave me a gift when I left.

Hastings – A thank you goes to General Frank Vavala for the ceremony in awarding a Bronze Star to Col Homer at the Veterans Day Ceremony. Delaware made the Congressional Quarterly; there is an article about the Veterans Home. I read the annual report that talked about recovering the rest of the DD214s from the Recorder of Deeds.

Davila – We are still working on that. The legislature needs to tell us that they want to do it. I have been working with New Castle County and Sussex County to get some legislation done. We have been speaking to a few people over in the legislature to actually get some legislation which would create that possibility for us to get all the DD214s from all the Recorder of Deeds and house them here. Then there would be one site and since we are the Repository for all DD214s, they will be handled out of this office.

Hastings – I have been brushing up on parliamentary procedure and Roberts Rules. I have ordered from Barnes and Noble, enough copies of this little book for everybody. This is a great book on just the basics of Roberts Rules of Order. In my readings, I have found that all government bodies, commissions, boards, etc., are required by law to use parliamentary procedures. Further, things like the minutes, are subject to subpoena. Our minutes are subject to subpoena, so we need to tighten up a little bit. The By-laws should cite a parliamentary authority, and this is the one that is most likely cited. This is Robert Rules of Order, new and revised, 10th edition. Like I said, I have enough copies on order and they will be here for the December meeting.

Davila – We are also subject to the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), which was mentioned also in the Sunset Review. If you are not familiar with that, you should look at that on-line.

Hastings – The By-laws state that the first thing a chairman does is appoint a committee to review the By-laws. There is a way of getting around that by using this thing to suspend the rules to appoint the committee later on in the year. But, there are some things that need to be done with the By-laws. One of the things is, Pam does the secretarial work, but really, we need both a recording secretary and a corresponding secretary. The purpose of the recording secretary is to copy down the exact wording of motions that are made, passed, or failed. Exact wording of the motions that are made and how many are in favor, how many voted no, and so forth. The courts look at that. They want to see the exact wording of the motion, when the motion was enacted, how many people voted for it, and so forth. You cannot get that by reading the minutes as they are written right now, because Pam writes a narrative of the tape recorder. So we need another person to actually copy down the words of the motion and that gets captured as the official record. Has anyone here ever served as a parliamentary?

Ennis – I have in prior service.

Hastings – So you have this book memorized?

Ennis – Not memorized, but pretty much aware of the things in it.

Hastings – I would like to appoint you as our parliamentarian.

Ennis – I will keep myself up-to-date.

Harden – How is Reese Philips?

Hastings – Pam said he called and he has got a problem with his leg.

Davila – It is infected.

Magner – Is he still in the hospital?

Davila – No, he is home now.

Carroll – I would like to ask the group that is forming for this committee to name the Home location and streets, to please bring something in writing to the next meeting, so we can put this together and go from there.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 21, 2004 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED